

# Divorce

## Part 2 of 3 Bulletins that deal with Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

### Review of Marriage

God ordained marriage for man and woman (Gen. 2:24). The Greek word for “*marry*,” as used in Matthew 19:9, is a verb of action (Friberg 64). The man and woman may say their vows, jump a broom stick, say “I do,” or perform any other action that will make the marriage valid. When the two are “*joined*” (Matt. 19:6) in marriage by God, a “*bond*” is formed (Rom. 7:2).

### Divorce

“Today, 51% of all marriages end in divorce” (USA Today Magazine, September 2001; American Families Are Drifting Apart). The word “*divorce*” is found in a variety of ways in the New Testament (NT). Jesus used the Greek term *apoluo* at Matthew 1:19; 5:31-32; 19:3, 7-9; Mk. 10:2; Lk. 16:18 to indicate a divorce (LS 102). There are other uses of *apoluo* in the NT meaning send away, release, depart, separate, and be loosed from a debt. Another Greek word used in the NT to signify a divorce is *chorizo* (LS 899). The word *chorizo* is used at Matt. 19:6; Mk. 10:9 for divorce, and other places it is translated depart and separate. A divorce occurs when two who have been joined together in the bond of matrimony depart, separate, release, and are loosed from one another. Note that the Greek words *apoluo* (aorist tense in the active voice [Friberg 141]) and *chorizo* (aorist tense with voice not indicated [Friberg 523]) are verbs of action. When two individuals marry, there is action, and when two divorce, there is action. Jesus gave the principles regarding divorce and left the action up to the judgment of individuals and the society in which they live (i.e., legal court, announcement to elders, put away privately, or other means of action). The fact of the matter is, something is done to indicate that one is “*put away*” (cf. Matt. 1:19).

### Who May Divorce?

God commanded that the marriage bond remain intact throughout the days of the married couple’s life (Matt. 19:6). The NT, life experience, and observation reveal, however, that divorce for unlawful causes is a reality in the world we live in (i.e., 51% are currently divorcing each other). Consider Paul’s remarks to the Corinthians as recorded in Nestle and Marshal’s Interlinear Greek-English New Testament pp. 672, “*to the ones but having married I enjoin, not I but the Lord, a woman from her husband not to be separated, but if indeed she is separated, let her remain unmarried or to husband be reconciled, and a husband his wife not to leave.*” Though a divorce occurs unlawfully, it has nonetheless taken place.

The NT authorizes a divorce in only one case, that of adultery. Jesus said, “*And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away commits adultery*” (Matt. 19:9). When two who are married put asunder their marriage for reasons other than adultery, they have sinned and their only recourse is to be reconciled or remain separate (I Cor. 7:10-11). We may use human terms to describe the above facts. Apparently there are lawful and unlawful divorces. A lawful divorce occurs when the innocent party puts away his/her mate for adultery. An unlawful divorce occurs when one puts away a mate for reasons other than adultery. Whichever the case, a divorce occurs and there are consequences. The innocent may remarry in the Lord, whereas the one who puts away for causes other than adultery may not remarry. Overall these issues help us understand how serious a matter it is when we decide to

choose a mate. The choice is a lifelong one.

### **What Does God Think about Divorce?**

God had permitted divorce for every cause during the Mosaic dispensation because of the peoples' hardness of heart (Matt. 19:8). Jesus said, however, that "*from the beginning it hath not been so*" (Matt. 19:8b). God has ever intended for a marriage to last for the lives of the two who are joined. The Prophet Malachi recorded God saying, "*For I hate putting away (divorce), saith Jehovah, the God of Israel*" (Mal. 2:16).

### **Conclusion**

Marriage is designed by God to be for life; however, the NT and life observation illustrate that divorce is a factor to be contended with. God hates divorce; yet due to the reality of adultery, He regulates it with His Word. The innocent party of an adulterous marriage is permitted to lawfully put his/her spouse away and remarry another in the Lord. Those who divorce for reasons other than adultery are to remain single or be reconciled to their original spouse. The divorce process is not specified; however, the general principle of action is. God leaves the action (process) up to the judgment of man and their society.

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